



**STaR**  
access, opportunity  
and acceptance

# Annual Snapshot 2020



# About STaR



## OUR VISION

With the right support,  
all people can  
learn together

## OUR MISSION

To achieve  
ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY  
and ACCEPTANCE  
for all people  
with disability



## OUR VALUES

Respect, Integrity,  
Social Justice, Empathy

# Comments from the Board



## Valentina Borbone – President

An unprecedented year due to COVID-19 has challenged the disability sector and all Australians. STaR managed the drastic change in operation well and continued to deliver support (differently), remaining positive and impactful. STaR ended its 19th year of operation as an innovative, specialist organisation that has built a strong reputation for unwavering expertise and excellence in the field of special education. Driven by clear purpose, the organisation has evolved in a conservative and measured way over the years to ensure long term sustainability and positive impact. This year concluded the 2017-2020 strategy, and the outcomes achieved under the strategic pillars Educating Educators | Supporting Children and Families | Informing and Involving Communities are significant and to be commended.

Building on existing partnerships and establishing new ones has placed STaR in a position to broaden its scope and we, the STaR community, look forward to continuing our important work.



## Stephen Fox – Treasurer

Initially, with the cancellation of fundraising events, it was anticipated the impact of COVID-19 on STaR would be considerable. However, due to government stimulus payments along with unexpected generous donations from our supporters, STaR has again achieved a balanced budget with a comfortable surplus this financial year. Prudent financial management and surplus consistency over past years has secured a strong capital base for the organisation. The STaR Board is vigilant in monitoring and maintaining financial viability to ensure long-term solvency and financial transparency to stakeholders.

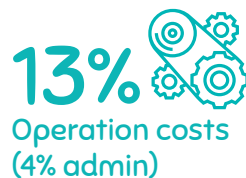
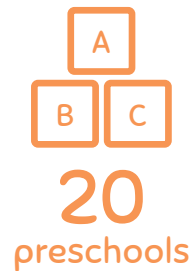


## Margaret Meaker – CEO

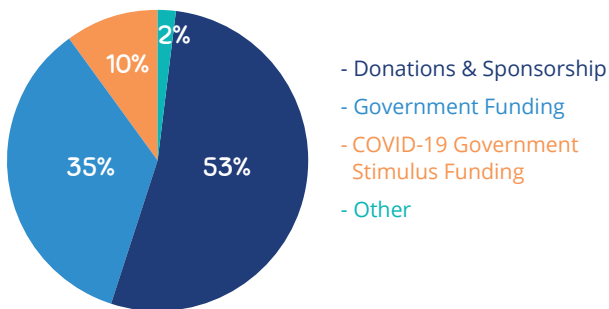
Despite the challenges faced nationally in a worldwide pandemic, STaR has remained focused on achieving the key initiatives set for the final year of the 2017-2020 strategy. The outcomes are well aligned and have positioned STaR to broaden its scope beyond early years to become industry leaders in research-based special education across the lifespan of people with disabilities. We believe it is a human right for people with disability to access lifelong learning and are motivated by the feedback from original STaR families that the learning of their now “STaR adult” has decreased alarmingly since leaving school. To reflect this, we have changed our Vision and Mission, which in turn impacts our governance, operations and service delivery. This expansion is made possible by strong and valued collaboration with our partners and sponsors, a committed, highly skilled board and an exceptional team of employees.

We conclude the financial year and three-year strategy in a strange time in which we are experiencing a good dose of perspective, a renewed respect for science and research and an appreciation of what we have. It is an exciting time for STaR.

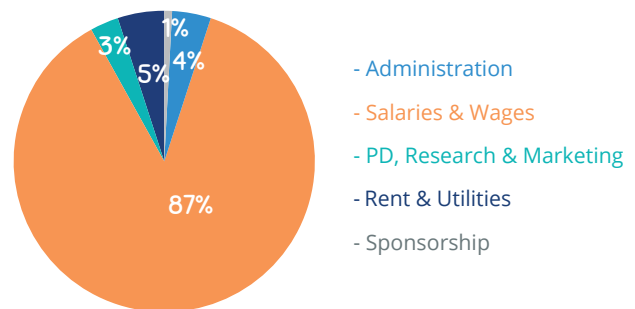
# STaR by the numbers in FY 2019–2020



## Where the funds came from STaR Income for FY 2019–2020



## Where the funds go STaR Expenses for FY 2019–2020



# Strategic Goals

**1**

## INDUSTRY LEADERS

Be industry leaders in research-based special education across the lifespan

**2**

## PROMOTE SPECIAL EDUCATION

Promote special education for people with disabilities to their families, educators, support workers, and the wider community

# STaR Strategic Pillars

## Educating Educators

### **Providing quality research-based training and mentoring**

STaR professional development courses provide educators and support workers with the knowledge and skills needed to maximise the potential of people with disabilities and to promote their inclusion. Evidence-based practice in educational, workplace and community based settings is the focus.



## Lifelong Special Education

### **Implementing best practice**

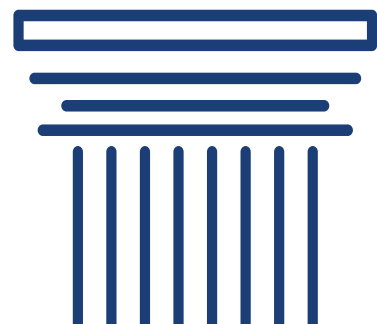
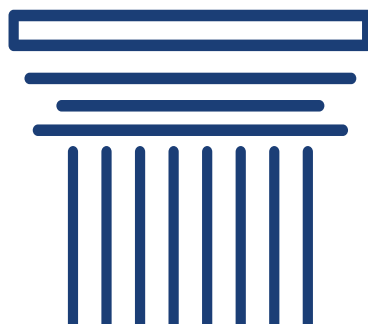
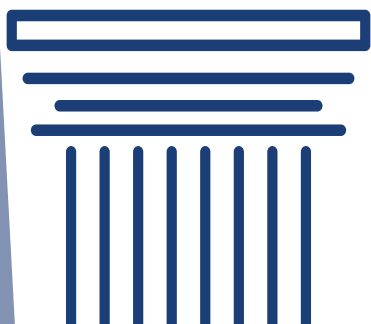
STaR Special Educators coach and mentor educators and support workers across a range of settings. This builds the capacity of these keyworkers to ensure that education and independent living programs for people with disability, from early childhood onwards, are progressive and meaningful.



## Informing Communities

### **Advocating for special education to a range of audiences**

STaR is passionate about sharing its knowledge and expertise. STaR continues to advocate for the right of people with disability to access quality special education.



# Outcomes Achieved 2019–20

## 1. EDUCATING EDUCATORS

Providing quality research-based training and mentoring

### 1.1 Register courses with InSpEd and NESAs

- All courses have been registered with NESAs and InSpEd as appropriate.
- An application to NESAs for category 2 endorsement has been submitted and approved.

### 1.2 Strengthen and develop our professional collaboration with the Department of Education (DoE)

- Delivery of Sector Capacity Building program is in its second year.
- STaR is an approved provider on the panel for Sector Development Transition to School project.
- STaR was represented at DoE Roundtable for Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Children in November 2019.
- DoE is supportive of STaR beginning a relationship with Tregear Preschool (one of the preschools STaR is supporting via Sector Capacity Building program) as a STaR supported 'Lighthouse' centre.

### 1.3 Continue to deliver the Sector Capacity Building Program.

- Sector capacity building is now in its second year, delivering support to 20 preschools in the North Western Sydney area.

### 1.4 Develop scope for STaR lifelong learning (LL).

- Scope was developed and a trial of STaR Lifelong Learning program in collaboration with a supported living and post-school service provider has commenced.

### 1.5 Develop and deliver K-2 training in schools

- STaR developed and delivered two courses for primary school teachers.

## 2. SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Building resilience through supportive networks

### 2.1 Maintain 10 quality centres - with a focus that they are 'centres of excellence'

- STaR program has operated in 12 'Lighthouse Centres' 2017-2020.
- STaR Outreach partnership has been established with Blacktown Council to provide service to all 20 Kids Early Learning Centres.

### 2.2 Embed family support into the STaR model and recruit an additional 'peer worker'

- An additional 'peer worker' was recruited in 2019.
- Previous and current STaR families are engaging with family support through social media.

### 2.3 Review STaR model training and develop online modules

- Training has been reviewed and modified in preparation for online training modules.

### 2.4 Trial a regional (NSW) STaR Centre

- Initial discussions with several potential Centre Directors and owners have not come to fruition. It was determined that Tregear Preschool was a better fit and aligned with initiative 1.2





### 3. INFORMING COMMUNITIES

#### Providing information about best practice to a range of audiences

##### 3.1 Deliver regular quality social media

- Weekly communications delivered via Facebook/Instagram.
- STaR website was rebuilt and refreshed

##### 3.2 Develop and conduct a STaR owned research project with a view to publishing

- A Macquarie University PACE research intern is being supervised to conduct a systematic literature search of measurement/ categorisation of play in early childhood settings.
- Findings of literature review will inform updating of a play scale measure previously developed by STaR, and trials of the measure will be conducted within STaR Lighthouse centres.
- A pilot survey of 3 parents of young adults regarding post-school learning opportunities was conducted. Results have informed the research questions and design of a survey and interview study addressing post-school options for students with disability.

##### 3.3 Increase engagement with the international special education community

- STaR representatives attended and presented at an International Special Education conference in June 2019.
- Special Educators attended a webinar hosted by Robin McWilliam and Cami Stevenson (US early intervention researchers) on the use of tele-practice.
- STaR engaged with the international research community via social media (STaR is connected with the Barton, Lane, and Hemmeter US research 'labs' on Instagram- Barton and Lane engaging with STaR content).

- Teaching team have increased awareness of current research findings from overseas. All are members of ISEI and engage in professional reading at monthly team meetings.
- A STaR Board member continues to collaborate with international academics.

##### 3.4 Develop and distribute user-friendly publications

- 'Tip sheets' for early childhood educators have been published and distributed to early childhood educators at STaR workshops, via email and in person during coaching visits.
- User-friendly publications overviewing STaR services, STaR's values/beliefs, and an explanation of special education have also been produced and distributed to relevant stakeholders.

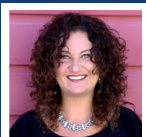


# We acknowledge

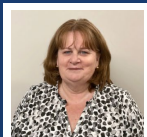
## Our Board members, Honorary Associates and Staff

For their ongoing commitment to the Vision and Mission of STaR.

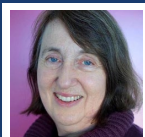
### Meet the board members



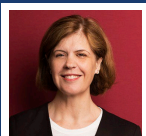
**Mrs Valentina Borbone**  
President



**Ms Margaret Meaker**  
CEO



**Dr Coral Kemp**  
Director



**Dr Rebekah Grace**  
Director



**Ms Kristy Michael**  
Director



**Mr Stephen Fox**  
Treasurer

### Meet the STaR team



**Margaret Meaker**  
CEO



**Megan Cooper**  
Manager, Families & Education



**Dr Sarah Carlon**  
Manager, Research & Education



**Sally Ryan**  
Operations Assistant



**Philippa Wong**  
Special Educator



**Elise de Jong**  
Special Educator



**Rosie Vella**  
Early Intervention Teacher



**Sarah Roberts**  
Educator

## Our partners and sponsors

The Australian Government Department of Social Services, the NSW Department of Education, MonSTaR Foundation, Australian Stockbrokers Foundation, Institute of Special Educators (InSpEd), Banter Group and Axi.



**Australian Government**  
Department of Social Services



**Education**







# Contact Us

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The STaR Association is a **registered charity**.  
By donating to STaR, you're helping people  
with disabilities to access lifelong learning. All  
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